The Frontal Gaze

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In Jean-Luc Godard's VIVRE SA VIE actress Anna Karina (or character Nana) pauses while speaking with a philosopher in a cafe, looks away from him, and then stares directly into the camera lens (i.e., directly at the spectator), after which she looks down at her drink on the table and finally back in his direction; in paintings such as Luncheon on the Grass (Manet, 1863), Giovanni Arnolfini and his Bride (Van Eyck, 1454), Reclining Bacchante (Trutat, 1824 - 1848), The Buriel of Count Orgaz (El Greco, 1586) Self-Portrait (Albrecht Durer, 1500) and Los Meninas (Velazquez, 1656) one or more characters peer directly out at the spectator; Diane Arbus often had her eeriest sub-jects directly face the camera lens in still photographs such as "Hermaphrodite and a dog in a carnival trailer, Md." (1970) and "Identical twins, Roselle, N.J." (1967); in Frank Tashlin's WILL SUCCESS SPOIL ROCK HUNTER? Tony Randall occasionally pauses to discuss the plot with the audience; Sabina, a character in Thornton Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth, complains to the audience: "I hate this play (Skin of Our Teeth) and every word of it." The list of instances of a subject of a painting, movie, still photograph or play directly facing or addressing the spectator seems endless. It can be a disturbing effect, but none of these examples of characters crossing the proscenium arch or popping out of the frame of a painting or photograph startles the spectator as does Nana's (Anna Karina's) simple glance into Raoul Coutard's camera. Film, perhaps the most ephemeral of the arts, enacts not only the most powerful and transparent narrative, but also harbors the most dangerous potentials for the spectator. It is but one facet of that potential I wish to consider in the present paper (extending it into consideration of the cinema's brother and sister arts): the repositioning of the spectator demanded by what I have termed the "frontal gaze" (the subject of a painting, movie, drawing, etc, looking directly out at the spectator).

Before the reader (spectator?) concludes that the present paper will

be comprised solely of a priori assumptions and ruminations of a cinophile

let us consider the appearence of the frontal gaze and its corrollaries *correlatives*

(e.g., characters in dramas addressing the audience) in various spectatorial

phenomenom.

Two dimensional representation is assuredly one of the earliest of the

arts to develop; its refinement in painting is where I have chosen to begin

our investigation. Regardless of where and when the frontal gaze originated,

it is fair to say it came to prominence during the high Rennaisance in

Italian portraiture. Though the English nourished a tradition of full frontal

royal portraits throughout medieval times, it was generally thought that a

profile was a much easier and more accurate method of representing a subject.

Since paintings were often called upon to fulfill what we would now consider

duties of the photograph (that is, representing the likeness of a prospective

but distant bride to a hopeful husband-to-be and similar tasks), painters

strove for accuracy and a true reflection of reality; the profile was often

the most facile method to obtain that accuracy. (Additionally, John Pope-

Hennessy states that until late in the fifteenth century all women were

portrayed in profile because it was the most "advantageous" and "flattering."[1])

Accurate representation of a patron's features was no doubt a serious

concern throughout the history of art, but Pope-Hennessey believes it was

the continuing project of painters to transcend mere representation and lend

character to their paintings, to convey the geist of the subject as well as

his or her guise. He comments:

> What is at one moment the projection of pure vision, is
> at the next a delineation of those moral and intellectual
> features we are wont collectively to call character.[2]

Concurrent with paintings' refinement of its characterizing qualities is an

increased use of the frontal gaze. We can hardly judge how the first frontal

gazes affected Renaisance spectators, but we can accept the frontal gaze today as but one tool in the artists portrayal of character. It's impact upon the viewer depends largely upon the expression the character bears; however, there is essentially no shifting of the position of the spectator. In paintings such as Durer's Self-Portrait, Mona Lisa by Leonardo and various other lone figure paintings the spectator enters into a private communication with the character. Just as in everyday conversation, we make eye contact with whom we are conversing and thereby better comprehend a person's full mental make-up through those barometers (windows, doors, mirrors, etc.) of the soul, the eyes. The frontal gaze in portraiture is little more than an added dimension in the characterization of a subject. Unless the character bears and especially abusive expression, the spectator will not feel threatened. The frontal gaze signifies an aspect of a subject's personality as much as a raised eyebrow or tightly drawn lips might. Pope-Hennessey declares that the "key to personality" resides in the lips and eyes. He feels that eyes "by the will of nature are the mirrors of our souls."[3]

Complications arise as the painting approaches narrativity. When more than one character is involved in a picture we suppose interaction between the characters and often conjure at least a limited narrative to accompany them. Though the lone figure carries the potential of this narrativity in its assertion of the subject's unique personality it usually requires the catylyst of a second or third character to bring it to full fruition. Once this narrativity has been achieved the frontal gaze acquires new and considerable powers. If one considers diverse paintings such as Luncheon on the Grass, Giovanni Arnolfini and his Bride, The Buriel of Count Orgaz, The Ambassadors, Reclining Bacchante or Los Meninas one senses that the experience of the spectator is greatly modified by the presence of one or more characters

staring directly at him. Whereas one could freely spectate most paintings
without "fear" of "discovery", one's right to spectatorship is challenged
by the frontal gaze of one (occasionally more) figure in a group painting.
In other group paintings the spectator fully dominates the image (system of
signifiers), the spectacle is defined in terms of his spectating. The artifice
is transparent and the spectator is allowed to view the spectacle without
being called upon to interact with it (as an ill prepared schoolboy might
fear being called upon to answer a geography problem). The frontal gaze
confronts the spectator's position of dominence and practically demands he
actively responds to the character. Just as Scottie Fergusen is forced to
reposition himself in terms of his spectatorship of Madeleine when she jumps
into San Francisco Bay (in Alfred Hitchcock's VERTIGO), the spectator of the
paintings above is enjoined to consider them from a different point of view
(location of spectatorship) than he might with a "normal" painting. Though
one can't really conduct a dialogue with a painting there is an exchange
that is activated by the frontal gaze; in effect we must converse with
a semi-autonomous character.

Naturally the generalizations on the frontal gaze above run into complications
and exceptions when applied to specific cases, intour examination of the use
of the frontal gaze in terms of spectatorship it is useful to consider
briefly a case in which a spectator is inscribed into the image; I speak
to the painting Reclining Bacchante. John Berger uses this painting to start
a section of Ways of Seeing in which he posits "men act and women appear."
Further, he states that the woman in the painting "turns herself into an
object 0- and most particularly an object of vision: a sight."[4] Ironically
in Reclining Bacchante the man (a spectator) becomes a "sight" to the
spectator of the painting and the woman, with her engaging frontal gaze, is

the active agent. In effect, she rebukes the dominence of the spectator of

the painting and is able to assert her autonomy even though her body is posed

in a rather receptive, submissive position. Had she been painted looking to

one side or another (even looking directly at the man) she would remain a part

of the spectacle. By engaging (and exchanging with) the spectator(of the

painting) she "acts" in the only fashion that a character in a painting may,

forcing the spectator to reposition himself in terms of his relationship with

the character and the painting. This coercion is not inherent in the presence

of a spectator in the image. That spectator may cause us to consider in gerneral

terms the role of the viewer, but it does not bring the immediate situation

to our attention in a manner that the frontal gaze does.

As we turn our attention (gaze?) to drama it immediately becomes necessary

to make one large assumption before we may consider what may be thought of as

the equivalent of painting's frontal gaze. We must assume that the frame of

a picture corresponds roughly to the proscenium arch in the theater, which is

to say, Paintings and dramas are both artificial and as such are separated

from "reality." If we accept these assumptions we may find a correlative for

the frontal gaze in a stage character's direct address to the audience.

This can occur as an aside to the audience (generally used as a novelty),

or a narrator's explication of the plot, but neither of these instances command

the impact of a character playing an actor portraying the character. By

this I mean instances in which the character "breaks character" in the normal

course of the play. Sabina (in Skin of Our Teeth) laments:

> I took this hateful job (acting in Skin of Our Teeth)
> because I had to. For two years I've sat up in my room
> living on a sandwich and a cup of tea a day, waiting for better
> times in the theater. And look at me now: I -- I who've
> played Rain and The Barrets of Wimpole Street and First
> Lady -- God in Heaven! 5

For a character tightly bond in the narrative of a play to thus break with

the codes of the text is surely the equivalent of the frontal gaze as

discussed above. The transparency of the text is clouded and our dominance

of the signifiers is challenged as we are pressured into exchange with the

spectacle. Narrators and asides lack this ability to call the paradigm of

spectatorhip into question because the character who narrates or whispers an

aside remains in the role of that character. Secure within the knowledge that

a character (even one who is a narrator) is restricted within his role we

are able to spectate him even though he may be addressing us. There is no

exchange or potential or exchange; the narrator/character is locked within

the artifice (spectacle) as a traditional character. Naturally the character

need not refer directly to the play he or she is currently in or the popular

dramas of the day, as Savina does, but the character mustnecessarily break the

mold of the role which encodes him if he is to directly confront the spectator.

Now that we have at least cursorily examined the frontal gaze in visual,

two dimensional arts (or at least painting) and drama the next step might

logically be to delve into the merger of the two arts: movies. Before we

take that step, hoever, we must first consider the still photograph. The

essential differences between the frontal gaze in the photograph and painting,

and the moving picture are ephemeral and difficult to clearly articulate.

The still photograph alone snatches pieces of reality and presents them in a

transmuted form and yet as a matter of course calls attention to its

form (textuality?). As photographer Diane Arbus points out:

> It's always seemed to me that photography tends to deal with
> facts whereas film tends to deal with fiction. The best
> example I know is when you go to the movies and you see two
> people in bed, you're willing to put aside the fact that you
> perfectly well know that there was a director and a cameraman
> and assorted lighting people all in that same room and the
> two people in bed weren't really alone. But when you look at
> a photograph, you can never put that aside.[6]

In other words Arbus feels that the photograph is "opaque" or perhaps

"translucent" (compared to the concept of transparency we touched upon previously); we cannot see its content without recognizing its form -- as we can to a large extent with drama, film and painting.(though painting largely follows still photography in this respect). Consequently the function of the frontal gaze is eclipsed. Though we find it again and again in still photography, dating from early Daguerrotypes, the frontal gaze merely confirms what the very form of the photograph had begun to question: the assumptions of spectatorship inherent in the medium. (A somewhat odd position for a photographer who has declared the subject more important than the form.[7])

FILM

As we approach our study of the frontal gaze in motion pictures it immediately becomes evident that one major difference that sets movies apart from the other arts is the relative infrequency of the frontal gaze. Regardless *e.g. Dreyer, Bresson, Godard, Sternberg* of the numerous pore probing close-ups in films since Griffith's time, there are exceedingly few instances in which the actor or actress was allowed to peer directly into the camera lens and *consequently the lens of the spectator's eyes* thus stare directly at the spectator once the movie reached the theater. Obviously "classical" filmmaking's avoidance of the frontal gaze indicates theforce with which it interrupts (ruptures?) the narrative; it's a startling, frightening image for the unsuspecting spectator. Beyond the shock qualities that have come to be associated with the frontal gaze there is a certain reordering of the customary positons of the spectacle and spectator. What we once (perhaps still) labelled a mistake in technique is now used by a medium conscious director such as Godard to dissect formal qualities of the cinema and scrutinize our positon as spectator.

When I first considered this problem I thought that the frontal gaze pricked the spectator into an immediate consideration of absolute and unimpugnable "truth." I now see it as a demand to the spectator to examine

the text and his relationship to it and that one consequence of this examination

is a necessary repositioning of the spectator. Though characters in films often

speak asides to the audience or address them as narrators (e.g., HORSEFEATHERS,

WILL SUCCESS SPOIL ROCK HUNTER?, TEAHOUSE OF THE AUGUST MOON, ME AND MY

GAL and many others) in a fashion quite similar to drama, we find that these

instances are peripheral to our study for much the same reason we ignored

them above: they don't alter the text as spectacle by destroying the fiction

surrounding a character. (Indeed, they strengthen the fiction of the character

by inviting us to believe he is the character no matter which side of the pro-

scenium arch he resides upon.) Godard ignites this momentary destruction

with Anna Karina's speechless frontal gazes at two different points in VIVRE

SA VIE. In both instances Karina is seated in a cafe and is presented in

close-up as she looks directly at the spectator. With this simple glance

Godard/Karina destroy the signifier "Nana" and reveal the repressed signified,

Karina, or some admixture of spirit, essence and being *"matter-energy"-Wilden* that Karina signifies.

One layer of the text has been peeled off, as if it were a linguistic onion

for our delectation, and the text itself acquires some of the properties of

Symbolic exchange the spectator. Karina spectates us and we former spectators consequently

become spectacle -- a mutual "spectation". The demanding reflexivity of

Karina's gaze replaces the spectator's passive viewing with a process of *communication?*

exchange. For the text has declared its autonomy from the spectator. We

can no longer dominate the signifiers, breathing "life" into them by our

act of spectating.

CONFLICT   Not only is the spectator forced into exchange, but the text is no

longer transparent. We are now cognizant of the guiding hand of Godard and

Coutard, blocking our view of the narrative (spectacle). Whereas previously

we were "close" to the film, identifying with perhaps one character and then

another, even occasionally assuming a character's eyes in a point of view

shot, our position is now completely outside of the text. Film encourages
the spectator to "enter" the fiction in a certain fashion. We share
Marechal's affection for Elsa in LA GRANDE ILLUSION or Amy Jolly's determination
at the conclusion of Sternberg's MOROCCO. The smooth transition from
objectivity to a point of view shot indicates that we are prepared to see just
as a character sees and assume his location of spectatorship (point of view).
Karina's cool gaze confronts this identification (assumption of at least part
of a character's point of view) and asserts the impregnable autonomy of her
point of view -- the spectator may not assume (possess) it.

Passionate as this repositioning is, its affects dissipate rather
rapidly in film. The narrative compels one to quickly return to one's former
position of spectator. Regardless of one's critical approach to film there can
be little doubt that it is a medium predicated on change (motion), situated
in an evaporating temporality. In painting the frontal gaze continuously
poses its questions, but in film the affects begin dwindling the instant the
frontal gaze is over.

I conclude this paper with apologies to Sergei Eisenstein, Andre Bazin
Siegfried Kracauer and any other critic who has hazarded a theory on the essential
differences of the arts, for I have certainly slighted all of their throughts.
What I have hoped to superficially illustrate here is the affect on the
spectator of the frontal gaze (and what I have described as its counterpart
in drama) as it has come to be used in painting, still photography, drama
and film. In each of these medium it demands a certain repositioning of
                                     ir
the spectator dependant upon the/particular formal qualities.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Pope-Hennessey, John. The Portrait in the Renaissance (Pantheon Books)
p. 35.

[2] Ibid., p. 28.

[3] Ibid., p. 62.

[4] Berger, John. Ways of Seeing (Viking Press.) p. 47.

[5] Wilder, Thornton. The Skin of Our Teeth (Harper and Bros.) p. 7.

[6] Arbus, Diane. Diane Arbus (Aperture) p. 6.

[7] Ibid., p. 15.

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Jeremy Butler   `The Frontal Gaze'

I Your paper is convincing if I accept
your premise that the frontal gaze
signifies a more highly developed
concept of individuality + so persuades
us more effectively to respond. My
intuition (not yet more than surface
investigation) tells me that, if the
work of art is a sign, + that if signs
relate between something + something else —
that they stand in the place of
that which they are not — than what
is meant by ' representation in a
frontal gaze should be examined
more closely. The whole notion
of symmetry + polarity, I think, underlies
the significance of frontal gaze in
Renaissance art — an idea which is
developed into 'correspondences' +
'analogy' in which face-to-face
is a sign of a 'prescriptive encounter'
sometimes more than an intimate one.

cf. VOLUME
BRECHT ON
BRECHT

II Check into Brecht on Epic Theatre — "A Short
Organum... "   Bobbie Kevelson

Frontal Gaze II

Jeremy Butler

English 145

Mr. Silverman

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The frontal gaze has occured frequently enough in the course of arts and literature to defeat most attempts to categorize its cause or effect. Even within the relatively limited structure of one particular medium (e.g., painting, television, etc.) the frontal gaze is applied with precious little regard for consistency. One need only look to paintings of the order of Los Meninas (Velazquez, 1656), Self Portrait (Albrecht Durer, 1500), Reclining Bacchante (Trutat, 1824-1848) or Luncheon on the Grass (Manet, 1863) to discover the varied nature of the frontal gaze within one particular medium. However, the power of the frontal gaze in dissimilar mediums such as painting, still photography and television is enervated by the frequency of its usage; film stands practically alone in its full utilization of the disruptive powers of the frontal gaze (though even in movies, the impact of the frontal gaze is occasionally vitiated). The efficacy with which the movies utilize the frontal gaze is informed not only by its rare usage, but by certain characteristics inherent in the narrative film.

In my first paper I approached the relationship between moviegoer and movie as one of action and presentation on the part of the movie, but failed to take into account the interaction and exchange that is a necessary aspect of the viewer-film relationship. I approached the film as solely "an object to be seen" (as Michel Foucault classifies the dog in Los Meninas). Consequently the "exchange" I perceived in the text of Jean-Luc Godard's VIVRE SA VIE was confined to Nana's frontal gaze (in the two separate coffee shop sequences); her gaze spectated us and hence we resolved into a situation of "mutual spectation" in which the film viewer watched her as she watched him. Under the terms of this concept, the viewer is constrained to become a spectacle (a text) distinct from the text of the film and "identification" is considered only as a function of the transparency of the text. Further, I considered the character an autonomous spectacle which may be strengthened by asides

such as those contained in HORSEFEATHERS, WILL SUCCESS SPOIL ROCK HUNTER?,
or TEAHOUSE OF THE AUGUST MOON, for example. Without wishing to repudiate
these previous conceptions of the viewer-film relationship (and ignoring
Anthony Wilden's caution agains the "equality of ideas" within the university
structure) I would now posit a continuing exchange between the text and the
viewer that is ruptured and contorted by the frontal gaze instead of an
exchange initiated by that same gaze.

The text-viewer exchange is grounded in a basic psychological concept
involved in the early development of the child: the "mirror stage". In this
stage the child adopts the behavior patterns (text) of his parents. In
Jacques Lacan's words, " he fixes on himself an image which alienates him
from himself."[1] In essence the viewer does much the same thing when he
views a film and identifies with it; he is filling his void with the presence
of the film text. Just as a woman may be textualized when a lawyer or judge
(agents of cultural texts) forces a story upon her in a divorce court, the
viewer accepts the story pressed upon him in the course of what Wilden has
termed "Symbolic exchange". Symbolic exchange is to be contrasted with "Real"
and "Imaginary" exchange. Whereas Real exchanges deal with "matter-energy"
and Imaginarywith "fictitious" entities, Symbolic exchange works with
"information", that is, with symbols pertaining to relationships. He cites
the example of the exchange involved in marriage: if one's brother becomes
married one exchanges the relationship symbolized by "brother" for the
symbol of "sister-in-law". It is not an exchange of matter or energy, but
of symbolizof relationships.

The viewer desires the textualization indicated above; he willingly
exchanges a relationship of the spectator viewing the spectacle (the text in
this case) from without for a relationship in which the text is actually

inscribed on the spectator. Consider, by way of metaphoric example, Henry
Hathaway's NIAGRA (1953) starring Jean Peters (viewer), Marilyn Monroe and
Niagra Falls (spectacles). The awesome sexuality and size of Monroe and
Niagra Falls, respectively, dwarfs the plucky Peters. The Monroe text is
superimposed upon Peters by her husband in the sequence in which he encourages
her to pose for his camera as sexily as possible, all for his spectatorial
delectation. This figurative superimposition becomes quite literal as
Monroe walks into the scene and casts her shadow on Peters' twisted form.
The Falls also attempt to dominate Peters in the concluding moments of the film;
her near journey over them in little more than the proverbial barrel illustrates
the power of a spectacle to fairly consume the viewer. Peters eludes
domination by the texts, but ironically only because of her inadequacies (in
inscribing the text that Monroe has in turn inscribed from another spectacle)
or good fortune (and the combined air and water forces of the border patrol).

The example I have chosen unfortunately connotates a negative "attitude"
of the text; nobody wants to identify with the grossly exaggerated sexuality
of Monroe (as she appears in NIAGRA) or spectate the crushing hugeness of
Niagra Falls from Peters' vantage point? Indeed, perhaps Brecht or Godard
would nurture these negative aspects, contending that viewer identification
with the text is morally wrong, but the fact still remains that the viewer
desires this identification and the concurrent exchange of relationships.
The filling of a void or a lack, which has been said to be the ongoing
project in identification, is also the basic premise of desire; when we
desire something it is to fill a cultural, emotional, physical, sexual, etc.
lack. To desire a text, a new identity, seems to be a continuing fascination
of viewers. If one assumes that the text must move toward textuality, then it,
too, "desires" this exchange, for identification is one portion of a cinematic

text's movement toward textuality, if we take th t term to denote, loosely,
a transparency of style. Just as a human being reaches complete, mature
sexuality when he hasfully adopted the text of the reigning culture (embodied
in the father and mother), the text approaches textuality when the viewer
identifies with (adopts) the text and is consequently blinded to the constraints
placed upon cinematic textuality by the camera, the editing table, the
projector, etc. Without this mutual desire there could be no exchange and
the text and the viewer would bemain in a state of Symbolic stasis. (Such
stasis is to be found in a relationship such as that between a man who
manufactures bicycle tires and a man with no bicycle and no interest in
two-wheeled travel.) Without desire, there can obviously be no exchange.

Identification as we have here defined,it, as the product of exchange,
leads inevitably to a double-bind that cannot be resolved in the standard
communication system of the cinema. According to Wilden, the silent film
communicates in the analog mode while the sound film's mode is both analog
and digital, as human speech is. Consequently it might initially appear
that a double-bind within these systems ought to be immediately resolvable.
However, the double-bind occurs not within the medium, but in our relationship
with that medium. which is to say, at the same time we are being drawn to
identify with the text and inscribe it upon us, we are also cognizant of our
own, unique text, wholly removed fr m the text we are viewing, which we
live each day. To transcribe our example to the Zen example Wilden uses,
we are being asked "Is this spectacle (text) inscribed upon you or is your
text completely different from the spect cle?" To which w must reply "yes"
on both counts, only to be struck by the Zen master's stick. This paradox
may be sesolved, however, when the text ruptures itself with a frontal gaze
as in the example cited in VIVRE SA VIE above; to complete the metaphor with

the Zen student: we grab the stick. The frontal gaze serves as a metacommun-
ication (in the analog mode) about the communication that is viewing of the
film text. The frontal gaze refuses to remain "quietly" within the diegesis
of the film; staring directly at the viewer, it spotlights his relationship
to the film and demands he consider the multi-layered nature of the image:
actress portraying character, depicted on celluloid, projected on a silver
screen. Michael Silverman put it this way in the paper, "Godard's
Criticism Through 1958":

> At its best the "look" (perhaps exemplified conveniently in
> Marina Vlady's open, unself-conscious gaze at the opening of
> TWO OR THREE THINGS) acknowledges our presence, takes into
> account the manifold vantage points of the narrative, and
> proceeds to encourage and subvert our gaze and the autonomy
> of transparent fictions. (emphasis mine)

Silverman's choice of TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HER (Godard, 1966)
and my previous references to VIVRE SA VIE are not coincidental, for Godard
is one director who does not shirk the responsibility of the text to criticize
itself, to metacommunicate often and passionately. In his written criticism
however, Godard seems to believe that the best films metacommunicate about
themselves without devices of the nature of the frontal gaze. To quote him
on the classically constructed Anthony Mann film MAN OF THE WEST (1958):

> MAN OF THE WEST, in short, is both course and discourse,
> or both beautiful landscapes and the explanation of this
> beauty, both the mystery of firearms and the secret of
> this mystery, both art and the theroy of art...of the
> Western, the most cinematographic genre in the cinema,
> if I may so put it. (Godard on Godard, p. 117)

Why, then, did Godard's own films enact a metacommunication about the film
text through the device of the frontal gaze? Surely he was talented enough
to produce the more covert communication enacted in Mann's work. One might
facilely reply that this is Godard's own personal double bind and not to
be trifled with, but I think perhaps Godard had intended the frontal gaze to
be

to be principally an act of Brechtian distanciation. By which I conceive of a
disruption of the text designed to force the viewer to critique his life
(his "behavioral text", as it were) rather than his relationship with a film.
In other words (those of Louis Althussar), Brecht attempted "to produce
a critique of the spontaneous ideology in which men live."[2] Through Brechtian
distance Godard turns our gaze to our behavioral text ("the spontaneous
ideology in which men live") instead of focusing on the Symbolic exchange
of relationships I have constructed above. Naturally these two codifications
of the effects of the frontal gaze (based on Brecht and Wilden) are not
mutually exclusive. One must recognize the precise relationship of his
alienation from the film text in order to begin to understand Brecht's
"spontaneous ideology". Conversely one must have a strong sense, if not
understanding, of his behavioral text in order to facilitate Wilden's Symbolic
exchange.

As has been shown, there are numerous instances in the work of Godard
in which the frontal gaze is used to Brechtian or Wildenian effect. This
should not lead us, however, to the conslusion that this is the only way
Godard uses the frontal gaze or, indeed, that this is the only way that
filmmakers as a whole have used it. In Godard's A WOMAN IS A WOMAN an entire
sequence is based upon shots of persons on the street looking directly at
the camera -- apparently cinema veritae. I refer to the sequence in which
Jean-Claude Brialy and Anna Karina stop men on the streets of Paris in their
quest to find someone to father a child for Karina. Inserted in this sequence
are numerous shots of Parisian sidewalks; disgruntled people, apparently
non-actors, looking directly at the camera. This example of the frontal
gaze does not so much "encourage and subvert our gaze and the autonomy of
cinematic
transparent fictions" as it simple denotes/improvisation. These frontal

gazes do not rupture the text of the movie for they themselves are non-reciprocal spectacle; we remain viewers in our customary relationship to the transparent text.

Other examples of frontal gazes which did not rupture the text are present throughout traditional films: Keaton looks directly at us during the mortorcycle ride in SHERLOCK JR., Groucho Marx (among many others) occasionally talks directly with the viewer in comic asides and actors in classical film by directors such as Dreyer, Bresson and Sternberg have been known to glance fleetingly at the camera. Though the appearance of the frontal gaze is rare, it is not unheard of. Only in Godard's carefullyconstructed context does the frontal gaze disrupt the text; in effect, he has invented the frontal gaze as a rupturing device.

In still photography one may say that the identification process included in the filmic exchange is constantly ruptured. Photographer Diane Arbus put it this way:

> It's always seemed to me that photography tends to deal with facts whereas film tends to deal with fiction. The best example I know is when you go to the movies and you see two people in bed, you're willing to put aside the fact that you perfectly well know that there was a director and a cameraman and assorted lighting people all in that same room and the two people in bed weren't really alone. But when you look at a photograph, you can never put that aside.[3]

Though Arbus has said that she feels the subject is more important that the form representing it, she realizes that form is not transparent in the still photograph as it is in the film. Consequently the Symbolic exchange described above for the motion picturesis not transacted; it is possible to inscribe a photographic text upon oneself (e.g., dressing in the fashion of photographs in a glamour magazine), but generally this is not the case. As with the painting, the still photograph communicates in an analog mode

which is immediately cognizant of its lack of the transparency mentioned
above. To return to our example from NIAGRA, the still photograph resembles
the spectacle of Niagra Falls more than that of Marylin Monroe. Whereas
Peters (the spectator inscribed in that film) may attempt to inscribe the
Monroe text upon herself, she spectates the Falls as an un-inscribable
text, a spectacle to be feared and admired, but not copied or inscribed. The
qualitative difference between a behavioral text and a spectacular text
(such as Niagra Falls or the still photograph) is too great to bridge.
Consequent to this textual distance, the frontal gaze in still photography
has little of the effect that we found in motion pictures. Since the days of
the Daguerrotype, pictures of subjects looking directly at the camera have
been produced again andagain, with no rupture of the medium. In point of
fact, the direct gaze reinforces the text by contributing to the delineation
of character (behavioral text) which "traditional" photographs court. In
aspiring toward character and subsequently transparency and away from pure
textures or color a still photograph approaches the textuality to which film
comes even closer yet. Ironically the frontal gaze in a photograph such as
Arbus' "Identical Twins, Roselle, N.J." (1967) furthers the textualization that
would be thwarted in just such a picture in a film.

Though many modern painters have opted to reject character representation
for the creation of intriguing designs and colors (cf. Larry Poons, Jackson
Pollack, Hans Hofmann), portraiture may always be with us in some form or
another and as long as there is portraiture, the frontal gaze will always have
an outlet in painting. According to John Pope-Hennessey the frontal gaze
as yet another purification of painting's ability to depict character, i.e.,
to inscribe a behavioral text upon a blank canvas. Writing in 1966, he
describes the project of a successfullpainting thus:

> That is at one moment the projection of pure vision, is
> at the next a delineation of thos moral and intellectual
> features we are wont collectively to call character.[4]

(In contrast, Robert Motherwell wrote in 1944, "As a result of the poverty

of modern life modern texts , we are confronted with the circumstance that

art is more interesting than life.[5]") In portraiture the painting invests

character principally in the subtle depiction of the subject's face. The

characterization can be strengthened, however, by the addition of other

characters and subsequently delineating their relationship to the main

subject, as in the case of the Velasquez painting, <u>Los Meninas</u>. In that

painting there is a highly complex system of exchanges between the eyes of

the viewer, the painter in the picture and the Infanta Margarita, also in the

picture. Additionally, the "mirror" in the back of the painting complicates

matters even further. Hoever, there is yet no Symbolic exchange on the order

of that which is to be found in the process of viewing a film. The viewer

does not inscribe the text of the painting upon himself and consequently

"enter" the picture, identifying with the text as one does in a film. Foucault

describes the analog communication of the painting (<u>Order of Things</u>, p. 4):

> ...we are looking at a picture in which thepainter is in
> turn looking out at us. A mere confrontation, eyes
> catching one another's glance, direct looks superimposing
> themselves upon one another as they cross. And yet this
> slender line of reciprocal visibility embraces a whole
> complex network of uncertainties, exchanges and feints.

The spectator exchanges uncertainties and feints with the spectacle, but not

his Symbolic relationship with it, though Foucault later posits just such an

exchange:

> ...the painter's gaze, addressed to the void confronting
> him outside the picture, accepts as many models as there are
> spectators; in this precise but neutral palce, the observer
> and the observed take part in a ceaseless exchange. No gaze
> is stable, or rather, in the neutral furrow of thegaze piercing
> at right angle through the canvas, subject and object, the
> spectator and the model, reverse their roles to infinity. (p. 5)

Feucault constructs a world of the picture and a world of the spectator and proceeds to define the commerce between the two. Relatively speaking however, a painting is not a "world" as much as a moving picture is. As some current painters have intentionally drawn attention to the surface of the canvas (e.g., Hofmann's Red-Yellow contra Blue-Black), all paintings must necessarily spotlight their surface to a considerable extent. To return to the mirror stage identification model, a film shares numerous qualities with a mirror that a painting can only begin to approximate. The image in a mirror, as with that of a film is more transparent, seamless if you will, than that of both painting and still photography. The inscription of the text upon the spectator, therefore, is much more pronounced in film and hence the disruptive function of the frontal gaze is eclipsed in painting. As Pope-Hennessy asserts, the eyes "by the will of nature are the mirrors of our soul,"[6] but not meta-communications about the communication between spectacle and spectator. Even a painting such as Recling Bacchante (Trutat) which purports to analyze the relationship of the spectator and the spectated by inscribing a spectator directly into the picture cannot be considered a metacommunication. As Wilden points out, an analog communication (such as a painting is) cannot comment on itself; "an artist may produce a painting apparently commenting on itself, but in fact the artist would be the commentator" (p1 171). Film, with its analog and digital components, can and does withstand these metacommunications, though the text is undoubtably momentarily disrupted.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Wilden, Anthony. _System and Structure_, p. 465.

[2] Althusser, Louis. _For Marx_, p. 144.

[3] Arbus, Diane. _Diane Arbus_, p. 6.

[4] Pope-Hennessey, John. _The Portrait in the Renaissance_, p. 28.

[5] Chipp, Herschel ed. _Theories of Modern Art_, p. 546.

[6] _Op. cit._, Pope-Hennessey, p. 62.

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